

§ 260.10

typically associate with that substance; and

(3) The substance has not been added intentionally to the product.

Example 1: A package of t-shirts is labeled “Shirts made with a chlorine-free bleaching process.” The shirts, however, are bleached with a process that releases a reduced, but still significant, amount of the same harmful byproducts associated with chlorine bleaching. The claim overstates the product’s benefits because reasonable consumers likely would interpret it to mean that the product’s manufacture does not cause any of the environmental risks posed by chlorine bleaching. A substantiated claim, however, that the shirts were “bleached with a process that releases 50% less of the harmful byproducts associated with chlorine bleaching” would not be deceptive.

Example 2: A manufacturer advertises its insulation as “formaldehyde free.” Although the manufacturer does not use formaldehyde as a binding agent to produce the insulation, tests show that the insulation still emits trace amounts of formaldehyde. The seller has substantiation that formaldehyde is present in trace amounts in virtually all indoor and (to a lesser extent) outdoor environments and that its insulation emits less formaldehyde than is typically present in outdoor environments. Further, the seller has substantiation that the trace amounts of formaldehyde emitted by the insulation do not cause material harm that consumers typically associate with formaldehyde. In this context, the trace levels of formaldehyde emissions likely are inconsequential to consumers. Therefore, the seller’s free-of claim would not be deceptive.

§ 260.10 Non-toxic claims.

(a) It is deceptive to misrepresent, directly or by implication, that a product, package, or service is non-toxic. Non-toxic claims should be clearly and prominently qualified to the extent necessary to avoid deception.

(b) A non-toxic claim likely conveys that a product, package, or service is non-toxic both for humans and for the environment generally. Therefore, marketers making non-toxic claims should have competent and reliable scientific evidence that the product, package, or service is non-toxic for humans and for the environment or should clearly and prominently qualify their claims to avoid deception.

Example: A marketer advertises a cleaning product as “essentially non-toxic” and “practically non-toxic.” The advertisement

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likely conveys that the product does not pose any risk to humans or the environment, including household pets. If the cleaning product poses no risk to humans but is toxic to the environment, the claims would be deceptive.

§ 260.11 Ozone-safe and ozone-friendly claims.

It is deceptive to misrepresent, directly or by implication, that a product, package, or service is safe for, or friendly to, the ozone layer or the atmosphere.

Example 1: A product is labeled “ozone-friendly.” The claim is deceptive if the product contains any ozone-depleting substance, including those substances listed as Class I or Class II chemicals in Title VI of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, Public Law. 101-549, and others subsequently designated by EPA as ozone-depleting substances. These chemicals include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, methyl bromide, hydrobromofluorocarbons, and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).

Example 2: An aerosol air freshener is labeled “ozone-friendly.” Some of the product’s ingredients are volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that may cause smog by contributing to ground-level ozone formation. The claim likely conveys that the product is safe for the atmosphere as a whole, and, therefore, is deceptive.

§ 260.12 Recyclable claims.

(a) It is deceptive to misrepresent, directly or by implication, that a product or package is recyclable. A product or package should not be marketed as recyclable unless it can be collected, separated, or otherwise recovered from the waste stream through an established recycling program for reuse or use in manufacturing or assembling another item.

(b) Marketers should clearly and prominently qualify recyclable claims to the extent necessary to avoid deception about the availability of recycling programs and collection sites to consumers.

(1) When recycling facilities are available to a substantial majority of consumers or communities where the item is sold, marketers can make unqualified recyclable claims. The term “substantial majority,” as used in this context, means at least 60 percent.

(2) When recycling facilities are available to less than a substantial majority of consumers or communities where the item is sold, marketers should qualify all recyclable claims. Marketers may always qualify recyclable claims by stating the percentage of consumers or communities that have access to facilities that recycle the item. Alternatively, marketers may use qualifications that vary in strength depending on facility availability. The lower the level of access to an appropriate facility is, the more strongly the marketer should emphasize the limited availability of recycling for the product. For example, if recycling facilities are available to slightly less than a substantial majority of consumers or communities where the item is sold, a marketer may qualify a recyclable claim by stating: "This product [package] may not be recyclable in your area," or "Recycling facilities for this product [package] may not exist in your area." If recycling facilities are available only to a few consumers, marketers should use stronger clarifications. For example, a marketer in this situation may qualify its recyclable claim by stating: "This product [package] is recyclable only in the few communities that have appropriate recycling facilities."

(c) Marketers can make unqualified recyclable claims for a product or package if the entire product or package, excluding minor incidental components, is recyclable. For items that are partially made of recyclable components, marketers should clearly and prominently qualify the recyclable claim to avoid deception about which portions are recyclable.

(d) If any component significantly limits the ability to recycle the item, any recyclable claim would be deceptive. An item that is made from recyclable material, but, because of its shape, size, or some other attribute, is not accepted in recycling programs, should not be marketed as recyclable.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Batteries labeled in accordance with the Mercury-Containing and Rechargeable Battery Management Act, 42 U.S.C. 14322(b), are deemed to be in compliance with these Guides.

Example 1: A packaged product is labeled with an unqualified claim, "recyclable." It is unclear from the type of product and other context whether the claim refers to the product or its package. The unqualified claim likely conveys that both the product and its packaging, except for minor, incidental components, can be recycled. Unless the manufacturer has substantiation for both messages, it should clearly and prominently qualify the claim to indicate which portions are recyclable.

Example 2: A nationally marketed plastic yogurt container displays the Resin Identification Code (RIC)⁴⁹ (which consists of a design of arrows in a triangular shape containing a number in the center and an abbreviation identifying the component plastic resin) on the front label of the container, in close proximity to the product name and logo. This conspicuous use of the RIC constitutes a recyclable claim. Unless recycling facilities for this container are available to a substantial majority of consumers or communities, the manufacturer should qualify the claim to disclose the limited availability of recycling programs. If the manufacturer places the RIC, without more, in an inconspicuous location on the container (e.g., embedded in the bottom of the container), it would not constitute a recyclable claim.

Example 3: A container can be burned in incinerator facilities to produce heat and power. It cannot, however, be recycled into another product or package. Any claim that the container is recyclable would be deceptive.

Example 4: A paperboard package is marketed nationally and labeled either "Recyclable where facilities exist" or "Recyclable B Check to see if recycling facilities exist in your area." Recycling programs for these packages are available to some consumers, but not available to a substantial majority of consumers nationwide. Both claims are deceptive because they do not adequately disclose the limited availability of recycling programs. To avoid deception, the marketer should use a clearer qualification, such as one suggested in § 260.12(b)(2).

Example 5: Foam polystyrene cups are advertised as "Recyclable in the few communities with facilities for foam polystyrene cups." A half-dozen major metropolitan areas have established collection sites for recycling those cups. The claim is not deceptive because it clearly discloses the limited availability of recycling programs.

Example 6: A package is labeled "Includes some recyclable material." The package is composed of four layers of different materials, bonded together. One of the layers is

⁴⁹ The RIC, formerly known as the Society of the Plastics Industry, Inc. (SPI) code, is now covered by ASTM D 7611.

made from recyclable material, but the others are not. While programs for recycling the 25 percent of the package that consists of recyclable material are available to a substantial majority of consumers, only a few of those programs have the capability to separate the recyclable layer from the non-recyclable layers. The claim is deceptive for two reasons. First, it does not specify the portion of the product that is recyclable. Second, it does not disclose the limited availability of facilities that can process multi-layer products or materials. An appropriately qualified claim would be “25 percent of the material in this package is recyclable in the few communities that can process multi-layer products.”

Example 7: A product container is labeled “recyclable.” The marketer advertises and distributes the product only in Missouri. Collection sites for recycling the container are available to a substantial majority of Missouri residents but are not yet available nationally. Because programs are available to a substantial majority of consumers where the product is sold, the unqualified claim is not deceptive.

Example 8: A manufacturer of one-time use cameras, with dealers in a substantial majority of communities, operates a take-back program that collects those cameras through all of its dealers. The manufacturer reconditions the cameras for resale and labels them “Recyclable through our dealership network.” This claim is not deceptive, even though the cameras are not recyclable through conventional curbside or drop-off recycling programs.

Example 9: A manufacturer advertises its toner cartridges for computer printers as “Recyclable. Contact your local dealer for details.” Although all of the company’s dealers recycle cartridges, the dealers are not located in a substantial majority of communities where cartridges are sold. Therefore, the claim is deceptive. The manufacturer should qualify its claim consistent with § 260.11(b)(2).

Example 10: An aluminum can is labeled “Please Recycle.” This statement likely conveys that the can is recyclable. If collection sites for recycling these cans are available to a substantial majority of consumers or communities, the marketer does not need to qualify the claim.

§ 260.13 Recycled content claims.

(a) It is deceptive to misrepresent, directly or by implication, that a product or package is made of recycled content. Recycled content includes recycled

raw material, as well as used,⁵⁰ reconditioned, and re-manufactured components.

(b) It is deceptive to represent, directly or by implication, that an item contains recycled content unless it is composed of materials that have been recovered or otherwise diverted from the waste stream, either during the manufacturing process (pre-consumer), or after consumer use (post-consumer). If the source of recycled content includes pre-consumer material, the advertiser should have substantiation that the pre-consumer material would otherwise have entered the waste stream. Recycled content claims may—but do not have to—distinguish between pre-consumer and post-consumer materials. Where a marketer distinguishes between pre-consumer and post-consumer materials, it should have substantiation for any express or implied claim about the percentage of pre-consumer or post-consumer content in an item.

(c) Marketers can make unqualified claims of recycled content if the entire product or package, excluding minor, incidental components, is made from recycled material. For items that are partially made of recycled material, the marketer should clearly and prominently qualify the claim to avoid deception about the amount or percentage, by weight, of recycled content in the finished product or package.

(d) For products that contain used, reconditioned, or re-manufactured components, the marketer should clearly and prominently qualify the recycled content claim to avoid deception about the nature of such components. No such qualification is necessary where it is clear to reasonable consumers from context that a product’s recycled content consists of used, reconditioned, or re-manufactured components.

Example 1: A manufacturer collects spilled raw material and scraps from the original manufacturing process. After a minimal amount of reprocessing, the manufacturer combines the spills and scraps with virgin material for use in production of the same

⁵⁰The term “used” refers to parts that are not new and that have not undergone any re-manufacturing or reconditioning.